



CAREER AND PERSONNEL INFORMATION

Joint Assignments for Logistics Officers

Have you ever considered a joint assignment? Wondered about how the joint assignment process works? Wondered about the pros and cons of a joint assignment? This article answers those questions and more.

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Title X: (1) established the mechanism to ensure quality officers from all of the Services are assigned to joint commands and organizations; and (2) provides the framework for managing joint officer assignments. A major purpose of Goldwater-Nichols is "to improve joint warfighting by training, orienting, educating and assigning high quality officers to joint organizations." It defines the process for assigning officers to joint organizations. This process focuses on joint warfighting commands. As a result, when it comes to assignments they are treated differently from other joint organizations. To understand the difference, you need to understand something about the different kinds of joint assignments.

Kinds of Joint Assignments

There are three kinds of joint assignments: joint critical, joint duty and assignment to a joint organization.

Joint Critical. Joint critical authorizations must be filled with a fully qualified Joint Specialty Officer (JSO), unless the requirement is waived by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. JSOs are Service experts in joint operations, organization, functions and missions. They have previous experience in a joint command or organization and have met all the criteria for the Joint Specialty Officer designation.

Joint Duty. This is the most common type of joint assignment.

Assignment to a Joint Organization. Joint duty credit is not given for this kind of assignment.

Officers serving in joint critical and joint duty assignments receive joint duty credit. This simply means the time an officer serves in a joint billet is tracked and recorded permanently in the officer's records. The Joint Duty Authorization Listing (JDAL) provides a complete listing of all joint-credit positions.

Credit for Joint Duty

There are two types of joint duty credit: (1) full-tour credit and (2) cumulative credit. Officers serving a full tour length in a joint duty authorization receive full-tour credit, while those serving less than a full tour, but at least 10 months or more, may receive cumulative credit. Cumulative credit is aggregate and may be combined across several assignments to obtain full-tour credit. Joint credit itself is based on the grade of the position, not the grade of the officer filling the position. For example, a captain

filling a field grade joint duty authorization would receive joint credit.

All field grade authorizations in the joint warfighting commands (for example, United States Atlantic Command, United States Central Command, United States Pacific Command and United States Special Operations Command) are either joint critical or joint duty billets, and the officers serving in them receive joint duty credit. In contrast, no more than half of the field grade authorizations in joint supporting organizations (for example, the Defense Logistics Agency, Defense Special Weapons Agency or the National Imagery and Mapping Agency) receive joint credit.

Joint Duty Assessment

Goldwater-Nichols requires JSOs assigned to joint critical positions be promoted at the same rate as line officers serving in the Service's headquarters. It also requires officers assigned to joint duty positions be promoted at the same rate as the Service's line officers. For this reason, the records of officers under consideration for a joint critical or joint duty assignment are screened. The vehicle to do this is the Joint Duty Assessment (JDA). The JDA checks for a variety of things: deferred for promotion, Unfavorable Information File (UIF), and the weight management program. Beyond that, the officer should have a master's degree, the appropriate level of professional military education and most importantly, a successful duty history. *Passing* as JDA is in no way a guarantee of future promotion, nor is *not passing* a JDA an indication the officer will be deferred for promotion. The assessment merely ensures the officer is right for the job and the job is right for the officer. As a final check, assignment to either a joint critical or joint duty position requires approval by the Commander or Deputy Commander of the Air Force Personnel Center. In contrast, the applicable assignment branch chief approves most non-joint credit assignments.

Any officer, O-3 or higher, with a favorable JDA, can serve in a joint position and receive joint credit.

Joint Duty Advantages

One of the major advantages of a joint assignment is stability. Typically, joint assignments in the CONUS are 3-year controlled tours that cannot be curtailed without a waiver from the Secretary of Defense. This, of course, also provides stability to the joint organization as well. Overseas tour length is based on the Service-established number of months. Generally an officer serving an unaccompanied overseas tour will receive cumulative credit, those on accompanied tours will receive full credit. There are exceptions to the full-tour criteria. For example a tour could be curtailed for such reasons as professional military education or command opportunities (commander or deputy commander assignments). For a first joint assignment this could take place

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at the 24th month and during a second joint tour at the 22nd month. In both cases a waiver from the Secretary of Defense would be required.

A joint tour provides both breadth and depth for career purposes, and selection for a joint assignment is a selective process. Depending on the assignment, the duties can vary significantly. However, joint assignments in the logistics arena provide Air Force logisticians a much broader perspective of logistics in general. Much like the Air Force Intern Program or Logistics Career Broadening Program, a joint assignment is perceived to be, and is, a selective process that will enhance follow-on assignment opportunities.

Other Facts About Joint Duty

- Among all the Services, the Air Force has the greatest number of joint duty requirements.
- Some joint organizations with field grade billets will allow senior captains to fill these positions.

- If you are interested in a joint assignment make sure it is listed on your Officer Preference Worksheet.

With the pending change to the Air Force Assignment System, the Electronic Bulletin Board will be shut off. However, all authorizations (joint or otherwise) can be reviewed via the assignments home page. The listing will include location, grade and level of all positions. It will also indicate when positions will be vacant.

More information concerning joint assignments can be found on the World Wide Web at:

DoD Joint Regulation: <http://web7.whs.osd.mil/dodiss/instructions/instruc2.htm>

Goldwater-Nichols Act: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/10/ch38.html>

New Assignment Sytem: <http://www.afpc.af.mil/assignments/oas/oasindex.cfm>

Joint Assignments/Officer Management: <http://www.afpc.af.mil—Joint Assignments>



AFLMA—A Well Kept Secret

Not too long ago, I heard two words that, when combined in the same sentence, would frighten any junior officer—*MPC* (as in the Military Personnel Center) and *non-volunteer*. I had asked for and received an education delay to finish my master's degree. I was nearing the completion of the degree and rapidly approaching four years time-on-station. I was checking the online assignment system every day in the hopes of finding the elusive *dream job*. I had already volunteered for three jobs and had not been picked for any of them. What I did not know was that I was the number one lieutenant in the time-on-station category for maintenance officers and MPC was waiting for the clock on my education hold to expire. Then, the phone rang, I answered, and the conversation on the other end went something like this: "Congratulations, you have been selected for a critically important assignment to the AFLMA at Gunter Annex AL." After I recovered from the shock a few moments later, versions of my perfect little myopic world came crumbling down. Two questions begged at me—I am going where? To do what? I am an aircraft maintenance and munitions officer and my job involves a flight line and airplanes. Last time I checked, neither of these could be found at the Gunter Annex.

Up to that time, I felt I was rather good at my job. I had taken airplanes to numerous points around the globe and received outstanding comments. After several conversations with my commander, I reluctantly accepted the job. Well here I am now at the Air Force Logistics Management Agency (AFLMA) located at Maxwell AFB, Gunter Annex AL—and enjoying it. The AFLMA is truly one of the Air Force's best kept secrets. What an idiot I was for even contemplating turning down this

assignment. In the short time I have been assigned here, I have come to realize that my education did not end when I received my diploma. I have been involved in a number of exciting research and project efforts. For this I found it necessary to read, examine and study documents and materials I would never have had the time or motivation to review had I been assigned to an operational wing. Remember when I said I was living in my own little myopic world? Through reading *Air Force Doctrine Document 1—Air Force Basic Doctrine*, *Air Force Doctrine Document 40—Logistics*, *Joint Publication 4-0—Doctrine for Logistics Support of Joint Operations* and *Joint Vision 2010*, I have only begun to understand tomorrow's military challenges and how the Air Force will contribute to the overall national strategy.

Ok, you are probably wondering, just as I did initially, What is an AFLMA? What do they do? Who do they work for? How can they help me? The AFLMA is a Field Operating Activity assigned to HQ USAF/IL. We are a logistics problem-solving agency that, using a broad range of functional, analytical and scientific expertise, tackles the toughest problems facing the Air Force. The Agency's mission is to increase Air Force readiness and combat capability by developing, analyzing, testing, evaluating and recommending new or improved concepts, methods, systems, policies and procedures to enhance logistics efficiency and effectiveness.¹ Within the Agency we have five product divisions: Aircraft Maintenance and Munitions, Supply, Transportation, Contracting and Logistics Plans—the same as those found in a typical wing—along with the Logistics Analysis Division. The analysis division provides state-of-the-art and leading edge computer support, analysis and simulation capabilities.

Anyone can submit a proposed project, problem or area for study to the AFLMA, but it should be channeled through the appropriate command LG. All command-level LGs are members of the Logistics Board of Advisors (BOA, an 18-member group of senior Air Force logisticians and officers) and we must have a BOA sponsor for each project. Upon receipt, the proposed study undergoes an extensive preliminary analysis and is submitted to the AFLMA Commander for approval.² If we cannot accomplish the project we will suggest other agencies that may be better suited for the task. When a project is accepted for study the project manager assembles a cross-functional team to study the problem. Together these functional experts and analysts ensure project results are sound, logical and practical. A multi-disciplined approach helps prevent functional sub-optimization. We do not want a proposed solution to a maintenance problem to create supply or transportation problems. It also broadens our personnel's experience and helps them adopt a true logistician's perspective. As part of the project effort we regularly update the organization or activity that proposed the study, along with the project sponsor. Upon the completion of the project the Agency provides the project sponsor with a detailed report which outlines the problem, provides a solution or solutions and makes specific recommendations. The sponsor is responsible for implementing the solution or recommendations.

The Agency's key strength is our people. Of the 41 officers and civilians assigned, virtually all hold advanced degrees—several of which are doctorates. Many of our officers and civilians are also graduates of the Air Force Institute of Technology. Just as important, our work force, to include the enlisted members of our team, has extensive and recent field experience. Members of our staff also have extensive numbered Air Force, major command and joint duty experience. Unfortunately, like many other Air Force organizations over the past few years, the AFLMA has had its manning reduced significantly. In just the last four years we have seen it drop from 92 authorizations in Fiscal Year 1994 to 75 in Fiscal Year 1998.³ By Fiscal Year 2001, the Agency will have an end-strength of 59 authorizations. At present we have 60 people assigned (29 officers, 19 enlisted and 12 civilians).

The AFLMA produces a number of products. These include: process improvement studies, software prototypes, computer models, policy evaluations, handbooks or guides and CD ROM-based products that can be used for a variety of purposes. In 1997, the Agency completed 44 projects. HQ USAF/IL sponsored about 50 percent. Major commands, Air Logistics Centers, the Secretary of the Air Force and the AFLMA Commander sponsored the remaining 50 percent. We also provide consulting support.

To maintain its recognized high standard of excellence and continue providing the highest quality of support to the Air Force logistics community, the Agency has developed strong working relationships with a variety of other Air Force, public and private sector organizations. For example, we continue to work with the RAND corporation in studying the logistic support concepts required for Expeditionary Aerospace Forces; the Logistics Management Institute on supply issues; and Synergy and the Air Force Wargaming Institute to develop and implement logistics play in GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT 98 (GE98, the annual political-military war game sponsored by the Chief of Staff, United States Air Force).

A collateral mission of the AFLMA is to publish the *Air Force Journal of Logistics (AFJL)*, the premier logistics research publication in the Air Force. The *Journal* is a professional, refereed publication addressing logistics issues, ideas, research and information for military aerospace forces. Published quarterly, it is distributed throughout the Air Force, Department of Defense, other government agencies, foreign military forces, US industry and academia. The *AFJL* also produces and publishes a number of other products to include monographs and books. Three of the most recent were the *Air Force Logician's Professional Reading list*, *Sourcing the Competitive Edge—Selected Readings* and *Logistics Dimensions—Selected Readings*.

Well, now that you know a little about the Agency, its mission and its people, you may be thinking, Why use the AFLMA? Five reasons immediately come to mind: (1) depth and breadth of logistics experience; (2) a high level of academic training and research skills; (3) recent field experience and an understanding of the problems field units face; (4) objectivity of the Agency; and (5) cross-functional teams and expertise. In addition, we work closely with the sponsor in defining and redefining what we study and our focus can be both short-term and long-range. On average the AFLMA will finish a project in under six months.

Additional information about the Agency can be found at the AFLMA World Wide Web site—<http://www.il.hq.af.mil.afmla/index.html>. Abstracts for our current projects and many of our completed studies can also be downloaded from one of several pages.

Notes

1. *Logistics Support Plan, Volume II, Mission Performance*, AFLMA, 1998, 1-7.
2. *Air Force Mission Directive 33*, Air Force Logistics Management Agency (AFLMA), 1 Jul 97.
3. *Air Force Logistics Management Agency Information Brochure*, 1996, 1-12.

Captain Melcher is currently a Project Manager assigned to the Maintenance and Munitions Division at the Air Force Logistics Management Agency.

Have You Thought About—

Any amateur can shove tanks, planes, and infantry around the map; the real business of war is getting gas, ammunition and spare parts to the people that need them . . . the tail, in the form of logistics will move and more wag the dog . . . logistics will increasingly become the single greatest impediment to have real combat capability.

Edgar Ulsamer, Air Force Magazine, Dec 83

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